

Harriet Lindeman:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Harriet Lindeman:

Welcome to Morning Prayers here at Appleton Chapel. Our speaker this morning will be Nicole Newell, Master of Divinity candidate of Harvard Divinity School and one of our choral fellows. Welcome. Please rise in body or in spirit as we read Psalm 47, found in your box altar.

Clap your hands, all peoples. Shout to God with loud songs of joy.

Congregation:

For the Lord, the most high, is terrible. A great king over all the earth.

Harriet Lindeman:

He subdued peoples under us and nations under our feet.

Congregation:

He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves.

Harriet Lindeman:

God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.

Congregation:

Sing praises to God, sing praises. Sing praises for our King, sing praises.

Harriet Lindeman:

For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm.

Congregation:

God reigns over the nations; God sits on his living throne.

Harriet Lindeman:

The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is highly exalted. (singing)

A reading from the Journals of Brother Roger, founder of the community of Taizé. May 15th, 1969. All through the day, wherever I am and whoever I may be talking to, I find ways of watching what is happening in the sky, the sight of creativity constantly in action. So many shades of gold set off by brilliant grays. Joyfulness wells up inside me. It is not so hard to bear the burden of contradictions.

Good morning everyone.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Nicole Newell:

And good morning to our beautiful choir. This reading from Brother Roger's Journal is one of many such entries that he makes about the sky and about the marvelous renewing quality of simply looking up.

I came to Brother Roger's writings and journals two years ago when I visited the monastic community at Taizé with other Harvard students. We were among the 100,000 young people that now make pilgrimage to Taizé each year. People come for a week at a time, living simply, attending prayers and working a couple of hours each day to keep the community running smoothly. But the community started small, with just one person. And that's Brother Roger.

Brother Roger was born in 1915 in Switzerland. He nearly died from tuberculosis as a teenager and later studied theology. In 1940, when brother Roger was 25 years old, he rode his bicycle into France, impelled to start a community of prayer. Brother Roger founded this community in a near-abandoned village called Taizé, just a few miles away from the Nazi-occupied region of France.

In the beginning, brother Roger prayed alone three times a day and provided shelter for Jewish refugees. After the war ended, other Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, joined him and took vows to monastic life together. The community of Taizé grew around a vision of reconciliation in the Christian Church across religious divides that had fueled centuries of horrible violence in Europe. Throughout the ups and downs of life and community in the church, and through wartime and peacetime, the sky was a constant reminder to Brother Roger that God is active in the world. Vast and beyond our reach, the sky suggests mysteries beyond our knowing and opens us to contemplation.

Brother Roger saw the sky as a sight of creativity, a source of joy and a reminder of beauty at work in a difficult world. And a difficult world it is. We remember today the events of September 11th, 2001, when four planes were crashed on the East Coast, one at the Pentagon in Washington, DC, one in rural Pennsylvania, and two into the World Trade Center Towers in Manhattan. Some of us were not born yet. Some of us, like me, watched these events unfold on the screen, others out a window or from the street, or witnessed the loss later from a hospital room or memorial service. We may live close to the fabric of this loss even now, or we may find ourselves more distant. Let us remember these events and their aftermath this morning with a moment of silence.

The sky on 9/11 was a beautiful blue imprinted with smoke and collapse. I wonder how Brother Roger's words about finding ways and watching what is happening in the sky, written in 1969, can hold that sky, too, in a vision of beauty, reconciliation and care. Perhaps those words cannot, or perhaps both visions must be held alongside each other.

Brother Roger would find the sky lifting him in tribulation or trial or grief, whether personal or international, to a deep, abiding and inexplicable joy in the mysteries of life and the mysteries of faith. The sky with its brilliant grace, not unlike this morning, somehow helped Brother Roger to bear the burden of contradictions, to hold joys and sorrows together.

For me too, looking up can often have the effect of renewing my mind or moving me to consolation and contemplation and joy, even as I stay with sorrow or loss. The sky is a constant backdrop to life. All is held there. What do you see when you look up? What does the sky return you to within yourself?

Harriet Lindeman:

Please rise in body or in spirit in prayer. Oh, loving God, be with us on this day that You have made and let us feel the mystery of sun and sky and new life, finding healing where we need it most. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Harriet Lindeman:

And now we pray as Jesus taught, saying, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Congregation:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Harriet Lindeman:

Let us sing the hymn This is My Song, O God of All the Nations, number 29. (singing).

And now as we leave this place, the peace of God be in your heart, the love of God be in your hands, the joy of God be in your soul. Go in peace. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.